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ABSTRACT

The Florida State Advisory Council on Vocational Education funded a study to determine the extent to which programs involved in vocational training represent a consistent, integrated, and coordinated approach to meeting vocational education, employment, and training needs of Florida, and to determine present and emerging patterns of governance of programs included in the study. Eight agencies who had working agreements with the Florida Division of Vocational Education and who deliver specific vocational instruction participated in the study. Data was collected through interviews with county and state level personnel in their respective agencies. Among the findings were (1) the various agencies have a high degree of consistency within their own agencies; (2) working relationships among agencies appear to correspond to the flow of money; (3) local agencies are not communicating to the same extent as state agencies; (4) program overlap was minimal; (5) the number of local agencies having working agreements with other agencies was low; (6) agencies studied were serving the minority population at a level equal to or greater than the minority representation in the county population; and (7) no attempt was being made at the local level to coordinate the number of trainees accepted in the various programs with labor market demands. (Recommendations of the authors are included.) (LRA)

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ASSESSMENT OF THE COORDINATION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION WITH RELATED PROGRAMS AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS

Summary Report of a Project Conducted for the
Florida State Advisory Council
on
Vocational and Technical Education

by

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May 1979

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary report of a study funded by the Florida State Advisory Council on Vocational and Technical Education (FSAC). The study, which was funded through Florida State University (FSU), was designed to provide the Council with information needed to address part of a federal requirement stated in the 1976 Vocational Education Amendments. This requirement, which was new to all state advisory councils, stipulated that state advisory councils were to:

> Identify, after consultation with the State Manpower Services Council, the vocational education and employment training needs of the State and assess the extent to which vocational education, employment training, vocational rehabilitation, special education, and other programs assisted under this and related Acts represent a consistent, integrated, and coordinated approach to meeting these needs (Federal Regulations, 104.93(f))

Identification of needs, the first major part of the requirement, had been addressed in previously funded FSAC studies; however, assessment of consistency, integration, and coordination in meeting identified needs had not been done by the Council. Thus, the FSAC undertook funding of the study reported in this paper. A final report of the study was presented to the Council in February, 1979, and contains a large amount of statistical data which were gathered during the course of the study. These data are narratively summarized in this paper, and the more technical components of the report have been restated in order that the reader might be able to understand the major purposes, procedures, and findings of the

study without having to analyze a large number of statistical tables. Omission of these tables from the summary report in no way damages the conclusions and recommendations made in the full report and should facilitate reader understanding of what occurred in the study.

As a final note, the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report are those of the study authors and do not necessarily reflect the judgment of the Council.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The major purposes of the study were:

1. to determine the extent to which programs involved in vocational training represent a consistent, integrated, and coordinated approach to meeting vocational education and employment and training needs of the state, and
2. to determine present and emerging patterns of governance of programs included in the study.

More specifically, answers to the following questions were sought:

A. Were program offerings consistent with identified employment needs?

B. Were students from various ethnic groups (e.g., Black, Mexican, etc.) equally represented in the various programs delivering vocational instruction to the state?

C. Was there any effort being made to coordinate the various programs delivering vocational education at the state and local levels to meet the intended population and labor market needs?

D. Did the various programs delivering vocational education constitute an integrated effort to meeting the vocational and labor market needs, or were the delivery systems operating independently of each other?

E. What was the structure of governance of the various programs for meeting identified labor needs?

F. Were there incipient changes in the governance of the various programs?

Definition of Terms

Terms that are used differently from their standard meaning or have special significance to this study are defined in this section for the purpose of clarification. It is hoped that this will provide a common understanding of the results obtained.

Coordination

For this study, coordination is defined as the relationship at the state level that exists between (inter-agency) the various agencies/programs participating in the delivery of client services that either directly or indirectly act upon the resolution of the vocational education and employment needs of the State of Florida.

Integration

Integration is defined as the relationship at the local level that exists between the agencies/programs within the State of Florida, involved either directly or indirectly in the delivery of vocational services to their respective clients. A further consideration is the extent to which these agencies activities (at

the local level) effect the resolution of the vocational education and employment needs, as identified.

Consistency

Consistency is defined here as the relationship that exists within (inter-agency) each of the involved agencies and the basic perspectives of examination for these relationships from state to local and from local to state levels.

Procedures

The agencies included in this study were those agencies/programs determined to be involved directly or indirectly with the delivery of vocational service to the potential clientele of the State of Florida. The methods of identifying the agencies included were to determine which agencies/programs (State and federal):

1. had working agreements with the Florida Division of Vocational Education; and
2. deliver specific vocational instruction.

The agencies/programs identified were:

+ The Department of Corrections (formerly Department of Offender Rehabilitation)
+ The Office of Manpower Planning
+ The Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students
+ The Division of Employment Security
+ The Division of Vocational Education
+ The State Mental Health Program
+ The Vocational Rehabilitation Program

+ The Retardation Program

+ The Youth Services Program

+ The Division of Community Colleges

The local and state levels of the agencies/programs identified were included in the population. A study of the agencies indicated that the individual county was the most appropriate sampling unit for the identification of local level agencies. The sample included eight (8) counties and the state level office of each agency. A stratified random sample of counties was obtained based on the levels of population density. The final sample was obtained from four census levels of population density (in proportion to the frequency of the occurrence in the population). The levels of population density and the number of counties randomly selected from each group were as follows:

Number of Counties	Population
1	Under 10,000
3	10,000 - 50,000
3	50,000 - 500,000
1	500,000 and over

Persons to be interviewed in the selected counties were identified according to the position they held within the organization or agency. The positions selected for sampling were those that were, as nearly as possible, responsible for the same level of agency functions. In all cases the director of the local agency was selected to be interviewed, for it was considered that the director would be most likely to be aware of all agency functions.

At the state level, however, persons selected for interview were those who directed the unit within the agency most closely related to the functions of the administrative units providing services or education programs considered vocational in nature. Although one person was selected at the state level of each agency, additional agency staff members were included in the interview where the different job functions prevented one person from being able to provide the needed data.

Instrumentation

The interview schedule, which was the primary source of data, was designed to facilitate collection of data. Questions and opinion statements were written to reflect the research questions as well as the factors of integration, coordination, and consistency. The instrument developed was field tested in a county not included in the random sample. Changes were made in the instrument to improve the format and the wording to more accurately reflect the intent of the items. More threatening items were moved to the end of the interview schedule, thus providing more time for the interviewee to become comfortable in responding. Revisions made in the instrument following the pilot test were considered to be those necessary to develop a valid instrument which would meet data requirements. In order to determine the reliability of the responses marked by the interviewer, the interviews were tape recorded. Subsequent review of the tapes by a project staff member provided an estimate of interrater reliability.

The items of inquiry on the interview instrument in the section dealing with coordination and integration elicited ratings on functions which included relationships with other agencies, understanding of other agencies missions and roles, sharing of information, indications of inter-agency associations, duplication of efforts and services, awareness and understanding of labor needs, ethnic nature and percentages of the clients, service groups, and the present structure of the organization, etc. The section of the instrument dealing with consistency probed for factors such as accuracy and consensus between employees with regard to the missions and objectives of the agency; adequacy of communication vertically and laterally; implementation of state level directives; local level input in the agencies' decision-making process; intra-agency system of accountability; affiliation of employees toward a common agency goal; understanding by a particular agency level of the rest of the agency personnel functions; personnel involvements that would further the agencies' purposes; the basis of the agencies' "reward system" (the compatibility of the reward system to the enhancing involvements) and indications of being appreciated by other members of the agency; type of vocational services delivered; and the nature of the vocational delivery systems.

Data Collection and Analysis

As noted in the instrumentation section, the data were collected by personal interview. Contacts were made to the appropriate office, and an appointment was made for the interview.

Respondents were asked to respond to items on the interview instrument which were read to the respondent by the interviewer. As a backup for responses and a reliability check, interviews were tape recorded. Interrater reliability was obtained by comparing the responses recorded by a staff member who scored the instrument while listening to the tape.

Analysis of the data included computation of various statistical measures such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages by agency. Comparisons were made between responses received at the state and local levels of the agencies.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As has been mentioned, an extensive amount of data was gathered during the course of interviews conducted during this study. This section of the report will summarize findings, conclusions, and recommendations made as a result of the study, including a detailed analysis of the data.

Program Offerings. Identification of the consistency of program offerings with identified employment needs was approached from the point of view that if programs are not integrated at the local level, then it would be reasonably certain that the production of the various training programs would not correspond to labor market demands. The objective, as well as the subjective, data indicate that there was a procedure that would preclude the development of new programs when the employment demand was being met by an agency that was a party in the integration process. For example, the coordinating councils in the Division of Vocational

Education planning districts must approve the implementation of new programs offered by the community colleges and school districts if certain federal monies are to be used. This, however, does not prevent other agencies from offering training or contracting for training of an occupation for which there is a labor market demand, and also an adequate flow of trained workers.

The data from all agencies indicate that labor market demand data is used in planning for program implementation. Equally clear is that personnel in the various agencies are concerned with the occupational interest and aspirations of their clients. With the additional information that the productivity of existing programs are not systematicall· compared with employment data, it follows that program continuation is based on enrollment demands.

Ethnic Group Representation. Ethnic group representation among the clients of the various agencies was fairly balanced with the population in the county. Because of the nature of some programs, e.g., Office of Manpower Planning, specific ethnic representation exceeds that of the county population. It thus appears that vocational needs of minority populations are being met by programs designed for target groups. Those programs designed to meet the employment needs of all community populations may or may not be serving the minority populations in proportion to the population percentage while, in general, the vocational education programs were.

Interpretation of these findings should, however, be approached cautiously. Although community college deans or directors of

vocational programs were asked to provide data for the county selected for study, it is possible that data obtained were representative of the entire vocational enrollment in situations where a community college served a multi-county area.

Coordination Efforts. The results of this study indicated that attempts were being made to coordinate vocational programs at the state and local levels for some agencies, but not for others. Communication at the state level appears to be more formalized than at the local level. It was apparent that the Division of Vocational Education was making efforts to communicate with other agencies included in the study. Communication at the local level was not as frequent as observed for the state level. In addition, local level respondents appeared to be selective in the agencies with which they communicated. It is likely that the local level agency personnel were involved in the delivery of services to clients and thus had less time for communciation with other agencies.

Although no formal attempts to integrate the various programs for the purpose of meeting the vocational needs as well as labor market needs was identified by the procedures used in this study, the respondents of the various agencies reported a low level overlap in the services delivered with those of the other agencies.

Program Integration. At the outset, it should be noted that the mission of all agencies included in the study was not the preparation of clients for occupations. Thus, program administration in agencies whose primary function is vocational instruction would

most likely provide the leadership for meeting vocational needs as well as labor market needs.

However, labor market needs data were considered in the initial program planning and implementation for programs for seven of the ten agencies in this study. The exceptions were (1) Bureau of Education for Exceptional Students, (2) Mental Health Program, and (3) Youth Services Program. Vocational interests and aspirations were found to be of importance to all agencies' delivery of service. An additional relevant finding was that the use of labor market data for the determination of where to place or train clients was practiced extensively only by the Division of Vocational Education and the Division of Community Colleges. The determination of where to place or train clients was primarily based on the client's choice.

Coupling these findings with the finding that there was no systematic method of keeping the other agencies informed of the number of clients (students) trained or placed for training, or placed on jobs, it can be concluded that the various agencies delivering vocational instruction to clients were operating independently of each other in their attempts to meet the vocational needs of their clients. In addition, if it is assumed that the agencies were offering training for occupational demand, it is apparent that several agencies could be offering training to meet the same labor market needs while not offering training to meet other needs.

Planning for new programs was, to some extent, an integrated effort among some of the agencies. Planning, however, does not

appear to include decisions about the continuation of programs where the labor market needs are met.

Agency Governance Structures and Coordination/Integration. In addition to the specified considerations of agency governance as those organizational structures relate to agency coordination/integration, several other factors appear to have a potential influence on agency integration. The relative compatibility or similarity of agency missions appears to have bearing on inter-agency relationships. Another factor seems to be related to the nature of the clientele and the occurrence of common client situations.

Additional, but apparently lesser, factors of coordination/integration seem to be regional population density, amount and diversity of employment potential, the occurrence of common socializing personnel experiences that cross agency jurisdictional realms, and the compatibility between agencies of specific agency jargon.

The effects of the other, previously stated, potential factors on coordination/integration have yet to be examined. In spite of the potential influence of these other possible determinants of inter-agency coordination/integration, an attempt was made to identify salient relationships between governance structures and coordination/integration.

Governance structures were categorized into four groups on the basis of the level at which policy/control was made. The first category was one characterized by local control, next were

those with strong state level affiliation, third were those with strong federal affiliations, and last, those within the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services.

An examination of data from the study shows that many of the relationships were not perceived similarly by the respective involved agencies and were, therefore, not considered as credible. Two agencies, the Division of Employment Security and the Division of Community Colleges, tended to rate their inter-agency relationships more positively than those other agencies involved.

The data also indicate that there is no salient relationship between governance as defined by level of control-affiliation and those inter-agency relationships considered indicative of coordination/integration. There does seem to be a need to consider the other possible factors mentioned previously as potential determinants of coordination/integration.

Incipient Changes in Organizational Structure. It was apparent that the agencies studied had, for the most part, undergone change within the five-year period prior to the conduct of the study. In addition, the respondents representing the various agencies were expecting the organizational structure to change. A lower percentage of the respondents from the Division of Vocational Education and the Division of Community Colleges reported having reorganization within the past five years. In addition, the agencies that had undergone organizational change were also the agencies that reported that changes in organizational structure were occurring or were likely to occur in the next three years.

Probing for the nature of changes that were expected did not result in meaningful data. It appeared that the respondents were aware that changes were in progress or were likely to occur, but did not have or were unwilling to indicate what the nature of the changes were likely to be. Thus, the question of whether or not incipient changes would enhance the delivery of vocational programs and services remains unanswered. It was also noted that agencies that had undergone recent reorganization were more likely to report the present organizational structure was not the most effective arrangement for the delivery of services to clients.

Additional Question Implied in the Amendments of 1976. An additional question, although not specifically stated, seems implied in the language of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976. The amendments direct state advisory councils to . . . assess the extent to which agencies assisted under P. L. 94-482, and related acts represent a consistent, integrated, and coordinated approach to meeting the identified vocational education and employment and training needs of the respective states.

Implied within the federal directive seems the notion that the optimum delivery of comprehensive vocational services to be potential clientele of any state is contingent upon the existence of interaction within and between appropraite agencies. And further, that the existence of the interaction can be determined and defined as coordination, integration, and consistency.

It seems possible, however, that other factors, yet to be identified, may also be affecting the occurrence of optimum delivery of vocational services.

We can, at this point, say that the delivery of comprehensive vocational services to the potential clientele of Florida is less than optimum. We can also say on the basis of this study that a portion of this less-than-optimum situation can be attributed to a less than desirable level of agency interaction. On the other hand, not all of the situations of the less-than-optimum delivery of comprehensive vocational services can be associated with agency interaction.

If an attempt to maximize the delivery of comprehensive vocational services is to be considered, more specific information will be necessary. Greater detail is needed with respect to the specifics of agency interactions to determine specific factor influence and to determine causal relationship. Additional study is also necessary to identify and subsequently define other factors that influence the development of an optimum situation.

Conclusions

The conclusions presented here are drawn both from the objective data reported in the study and the subjective statements by those that were interviewed. As the data were obtained from a relatively small sample of the employees of the various agencies, the conclusions should be considered tentative.

1. It appears that the various agencies have a high degree of consistency within their own agencies. Communications appeared to be the most salient problem in maintaining consistency within an agency.

2. Communications seems to be occurring to some extent among the personnel of the various agencies at both the state and local levels, i.e., meetings are held and information is being exchanged among the various agencies. Thus, there is some awareness of agency functions. However, the conclusion drawn by the researchers is that there is little, if any, coordinated planning by the agencies to meet manpower demand. The personnel of many agencies indicate that they use manpower data to justify the implementation of programs. There was little, if any, indication that the agencies notified other agencies of the numbers of clients they were training to meet employment demands. In addition, the subjective feeling of the researchers was that manpower data are used only for planning for the implementation of new programs and that student (client) interest was the determining factor for continuing programs.

3. Working relationships among agencies appear to correspond to the flow of money.

4. The flow of written communication seems to be occurring at the state level, but not at the local level, i.e., state agency to state agency and state agency to local agency, but not local to local. Integration at the local level appears to be occurring via informal contacts and meetings, when it occurs. Division of Vocational Education meetings with most agencies were limited to once or twice per year with the exception of the Office of Manpower Planning and the Division of Employment Security.

5. Coordination activities at the state level appear to have resulted in at least a perception that the program overlap was mini-

mal. In addition, overlap was considered to be positive when it occurred. However, similar activities to integrate the delivery of services and training programs among the agencies did not appear to be occurring. There were, however, frequent references to coordinating groups and councils by the respondents.

It was the feeling of the researchers that much of the perceived absence of overlap was due to the lack of knowledge of what the other agencies were doing.

6. It was apparent that no attempt was being made at the local level to coordinate the number of trainees placed or accepted in the various training programs with labor market demands. That is, there appeared to be no communication among agencies offering training or placing clients for training concerning the number of clients (students) being trained for a particular occupation. Thus it was concluded that the delivery systems were operating independently of each other and the identified training needs.

7. It appears that the level of integration and coordination with the Mental Health Program and most of the other agencies included in the study is minimal.

8. The number of local agencies that reported having any kind of working agreement with other agencies was considered to be low. The majority of local level respondents of the Division of Vocational Education reported having agreements with four of the nine other agencies.

9. The agencies studied were, for the most part, serving the minority population at a level equal to or greater than the minority representation in the county population. There was a tendency

observed for the Division of Community Colleges and Mental Health Program to serve a lower percentage of minorities than that which existed in the population of the service area, while the Office of Manpower Planning served a higher percentage of minorities in comparison to the county population.

Recommendations

The researchers formulated some specific recommendations based on the findings of the study. Because of the tentativeness of the findings and the complexity of the interactions of agencies it is possible that the recommendations made here may (1) have already been implemented, (2) be impracticable, or (3) be inappropriate. The recommendaitons are as follows:

1. A concerted effort should be made by the personnel in each of the agencies to improve two-way communication between the state and local levels of the agencies as well as among the agencies at the two levels.

2. An information system should be designed and implemented for the purpose of informing the various agencies delivering vocational instruction about the number of trainees graduating from and enrolled in training programs offered by the various agencies. Such a system should include provisions for comparing the productivity of training programs to the labor market demand.

3. A coordinated effort should be made at the state and local levels of the agencies providing training to meet the vocational needs of the citizens as well as the labor market needs of society.

Such an effort would require cooperation among agencies in delivering vocational programs as well as the referral of students (clients) to available training programs. The implementation of this recommendation could be accomplished by augmenting the existing coordinating councils in the Division of Vocational Education Planning Districts with representatives from all agencies offering vocational training. Such an augmented committee should be charged with monitoring the productivity of existing programs that prepare trained workers for specific occupations.

4. Most agencies reported serving minority populations at a level equal to or greater than that which would be representative of the community. However, it is recommended further study be done to identify factors concerning why various agencies are not serving the minority population at or above the level of percentage in the service area.

5. A high percentage of respondents of some agencies reported that the present governance structure was not the most effecitve for the delivery of the agencies' services. Thus, it is recommended that personnel within these agencies take a close look to determine the causes for these concerns.

6. It is recommended that the personnel within the agencies delivering vocational training and/or services, be provided in-service training for the purpose of informing each of the agency's personnel about the functions of the other agencies.

7. A considerable number of respondents suggested that their agency's reward system was not supportive of quality client services or conducive to personnel involvement in enhancing professional

development activities. Thus, it is recommended that additional research into the impact of appropriateness of the agencies' reward system be conducted.

8. On a number of occasions, respondents st.ced a concern about a potential conflict between the incarceration function of the Department of Corrections, as compared to the educational/ rehabilitation function. It is therefore suggested that this concern be given further investigation.

9. The present study only scratches the surface of the question of the degree to which programs affecting vocational training represent a consistent, integrated, and coordinated approach to meeting the vocational and employment needs of the state. Thus, it is recommended that additional studies be conducted to provide a more indepth look at this important concern. Specifically, studies should be conducted to: (1) replicate and expand the present study and (2) examine the factors that enhance the possibilities of coordination of vocational education programs and activities.